

CENTRAL ASIA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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Central Asia is an important region in Asian steps. In past, the region was a place where many of the great civilizations emerged. To know Central Asia is to witness her struggles. Epic battles have been waged here: between democracy and communism; capitalism and socialism; nomadic and sedentary cultures; Iranian and Turkic peoples; Muslim and Christian identities; indigenous and imperialistic forces. Legendary conquerors have swept across the Central Asian steps: Atilla the Hun, Genghis Khan, Alexander the Great and Timur. (1) The history of the region witnessed to the rise and the fall of the great empires such as the Sythians, Achaemenians, Mongols, Persians, Turks, Russians, and the Soviets. That's why this region had named as a "heartland" of world for a long time in the past. The area commonly referred to as Central Asia stretches from the Caspian Sea on the West to the mountains of the east providing a natural border with China's Xinjiang region and from its Northern border with Russia to its southern border with Afghanistan and Iran. It has a population of 56 million people living on approximately four million square kilometers. (2) Demise of the Soviet Union not only ended the Cold War also it is thought that it brought disorder to the world politics/international order with potential problems which are difficult to solve and might effect long-term stability of the world. The other consequence of the disintegration is the emergence of fifteen new states including the former Soviet republics of Central Asia; Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Before the Russian expansion towards Central Asian territories, heads of tribes and clans ruled the region. Also two significant powers the Bukhara Emirate and the Khiva Khanate existed as dominant players of the region. Central Asian Turks could not put any power against imperialistic Tsarist Russia because of widely scattered and misguided army forces, struggles given for independence in Gokdepe (Turkmenistan) Battle (1879–1881) were not enough to defeat the disciplined Russian Army under the command of General Skobolyev. Whole the history of 19th century of the region is bloody locals were tightly wedged between two enormous forces.

All the republics in the region share a recent colonial past; the Russian Empire advanced to the southeast into the Kazakh steppe at first in the 18th century, until it finally established political and administrative control over the Steppe region and Turkestan in the 1860–80s. The Russo–British Pamir Treaty of 1895, which delimited northern borders of Afghanistan, was a pivotal step in redefining indigenous identities in reference to a modern territorial criterion. After 1917, a Soviet nationality policy took the relay, and the "National Delimitation" plans (*natsional'no gosudarstvennoye razmezhovanie*) were put into place in 1924–25. This plan was aimed at shaping new national identities based on language and territory. The Soviet Constitution further solidified the new national frameworks in 1936 by granting the republics. (3) Formation of republics lasted for about more than 10 years and completed in late 1930's. During the period of Soviets hegemony over the region republics economies were state–centric and Moscow–centered. Secretary General of Communist Party took all the decisions and necessary actions. Generally regions lands were widely used for cotton production for industrialized Slavic republics and Caspian basin oil and other natural resources were directly transported to industrialized cities in order to be used in production.

End of the Cold War generated;

- Demise of the Soviet Union and its allies such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia,
- Transition of Power
- Changes in Political Map of the world.

After the developments by new formations Central Asia was face to face with potential problems of the region and interstate disputes that might explore any time, affect the future stability of it. 1991 was a year of difficulties because governments had to consolidate their new statehoods and build up new systems, which would fit with principles of nation building in order to maintain their independence. By the rapid changes and formations in last decade began a new on-going debate over the map of Central Asia.

So far, had named differently under different powers, during the Tsarist hegemony had a name "Turkestan" (Land of Turks), Soviet Union gave the region the name "Middle Asia and Kazakhstan". Nowadays, debate is should states such as Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan be included to the region or not. Some argue that Russian Federation has also place in regional map, but the reality is; the states of region have very close ties from history, they share common culture, language and history. Region is fragile, so if you consider new states such as Afghanistan, who is trying to survive with its own internal and external problems and disputes, in the new map as a regional state, obviously the region will be fragmented. In past, middle ages, Central Asia was the main route of "Great Silk Road" and earned her geopolitical and geostrategic importance by providing path to the West, trade flourished in the region and led to good relations with other states. As we already know from history of the Middle East, epoch when oil-rich reserves were found in Persian Gulf in the territories of Gulf States, the framework of the region changed by its potential energy importance. These states were brought to the world arena and they are still keeping their significance as a current issue. The same event is about to happen in Central Asia as well. Already proven Caspian gas reserves are at 243–248 trillion cubic feet (tcf), which is comparable to the North American reserves of 300 tcf.

This along with their geographic proximity to China and India makes the gas rich Caspian states Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan potential supply sources for Asian energy markets. (4) If we consider other reserves especially Turkmenistan with the forth largest reserves of natural gas of world and Kazakhstan as a second source of oil energy reserves after Gulf States, it will be much more easier to understand on what basis the significance is shaping.

With the terrorist attacks on 11th of September 2001, and during the period of reconstructing Afghanistan after the war, historical and geopolitical importance of the region is renewed. The five Central Asian nations – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan– are now at the center of a major diplomatic and military effort against terrorism. This will have an enormous impact on the region as well. (5) At the moment there is a need for security and stability in the region. Any kind of serious dispute or problem at this stage means future threat of peace. The appearance of radical religious extremist groups, streams in Fergana Valley Uzbekistan and their allies in different countries such as in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan perceived as a new and big threat to stability.

These kinds of movements were especially supported by Taliban regime during their control over Afghanistan. With the intervention to Afghanistan, Taliban regime was withdrawn but extremists who they supported still exist. It gives the idea of that continuing rise and strengthened radical groups is a global trouble it can add fuel to other groups also which are

existing in Russia, Xinjiang region in China where Uigurs minority live, Iran and Pakistan as well. If we need stability, so we have to provide economic prosperity in the region otherwise interest groups will support high rate of unemployed population in order to achieve their dirty aims, disorder and trouble will be inevitable.



(6)

Sources of Tension

In 11 years of independence, Central Asian states were successful in establishing national states and defining main pillars of their foreign policies but it was too early to talk about solving problems of the region and interstate disputes even there were several attempts. Lack of authorities in governments and declining economies of former Soviet Republics did not give any chance even to involve these issues. It was really very difficult to tackle crisis and find solutions to disputes without the help of outside world. Depending on their extent potential problems of the region may be categorized in two main groups as follows;

Regional Problems: Problems that directly refer to all states of the region and affect them on internal and external basis. – Rise of militant, extremist, radical religious groups

- Drugs and weapons trafficking – Human rights abuses
- Ethnic conflicts (in Tajikistan)
- Humanitarian disaster – Environmental Catastrophe (Drying Aral Sea) – Energy security
- Unemployment

Interstate Disputes: Disputes or misunderstanding between two regional states. – Border dispute

- Use of water and water distribution disputes – Customs
- Visa regulations

The most important problems of the region are considered as border, unemployment and water distribution, because these factors are seen as the sources of other tensions, which are connected with each other and makes the region a complex web of problematic issues. In Central Asia, high unemployment fosters the smuggling of raw materials and consumer goods, and trafficking in arms and drugs.

Eighty percent of heroin sold in Europe originates in Afghanistan and Pakistan and half of this production flows through Central Asia. (7) For the region Russia is only source of employment, a significant market for local products as well. (8)

Unemployment is a key factor that forces people to engage in "dirty war", radicalism, extremism supported by interest groups whose aim is to provoke and set fire instability in the region. Moscow established administrative borders of its Central Asian republics in the mid-1920's, which followed neither natural geographic boundaries nor strict ethnic lines. Soviet planners often avoided drawing more homogeneous or compact republics for fear they would fuel separatism. (9) As a result, after independence each state has territorial claims to each other. This matter rises as a political crisis when there is a disagreement and incompatibility among states on specific harmony. The results of these tensions have been border restrictions and closures, introduction of visa regimes, energy cuts, water disputes and even mining of disputed frontiers. Partially as a consequence of border restrictions, trade between Central Asian states has tapered off in recent years, seriously impeding economic developments in some areas. (10) The fragmentation of Central Asia is a painful and unpleasant lesson for the local population. With the imaginary administrative borders of Soviet times having become real ones, some locals face real borders for the first time in their lives. A visa requirement was first imposed by Turkmenistan, and then by Uzbekistan. It becomes a serious impediment for the cross border migration of trade and labor. (11) There is an urgent need to encourage cross-border trade and free communication among citizens of the region, to increase interstate movement and information flows, especially in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

Public opinion on the border disorder nevertheless has very little impact on governments of the region. Poverty and a lack of good governance exacerbate the border problems greatly contributing to instability in the region. (12) The resolution of border issues peacefully and transparently would have a positive impact on regional security, economic cooperation, ethnic relations and efforts to combat drug trafficking and religious extremism, but has been slow, and no immediate breakthrough can be seen in all too often antagonistic process that is defining the new map of Central Asia. (13) The borders are problematic in the Fergana Valley. Most of the valley lies within the territory of Uzbekistan but is bordered by Kyrgyzstan on the north, east, and by Tajikistan in the southwest. The Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan-Tajikistan borders zigzag back and forth across the valley's roadways. The valley's main east-west road and rail transit routes pass through northern Tajikistan en route out to Uzbekistan. (14) All three countries that share it-Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan-have both historical claims to each other's territory and economic interests in the roadways route, water streams and industries. A volatile region, long dominated by Russia is also water scarce. Mountainous Kyrgyzstan, along with Tajikistan, are the main suppliers of water in Central Asia. Meanwhile, the low-lying states of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are the major consumers of water, much of which is wasted due to inadequate infrastructure and insufficient irrigation practices. (15)

During the Soviet era, the region states were forced to develop agriculture. Irrigation system and water distribution were under control of Moscow. After independence break down and decay of irrigation system and mismanagement and overuse of water by downstream countries led to disputes. Difficulties in exporting natural resources again turned states interests to agriculture industry that is still mainstay of the region as it was in Russian dominance. In this issue, crises rise as the vital interests of region states when they abuse the signed or agreed documents on water distribution and use. Countries that are suppliers of water Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan see water as a national commodity and raw material and willing to charge it. Agreement between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan on barter water instead of energy did not work because of Uzbek side's abuse of agreement. Uzbekistan took such kind of strong action against Kyrgyzstan, because it

has stronger economy than Kyrgyzstan's and Uzbekistan makes sense for other region states as well.

The regions two main river systems the Amu Darya and Syr Darya, each pass through several international borders on their way to the Aral Sea. Two rivers, the Amudarya and Syr Darya are the principal water sources, especially for the downstream countries of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and southern Kazakhstan, which have largely desert climates. Irrigation has practiced in Central Asia for millennia, but irrigated area almost doubled between 1950 and 1980, leading to large-scale diversions of water from the rivers, and a reduction of about 80 percent of the water flow into the Aral Sea. About 40 million people depend in one way or another on irrigated agriculture.

The shrinking of Aral Sea, whose surface area has declined by over 50 percent over the last 40 years, has meant economic losses for the 3.5 million people living in the vicinity of the sea –from declining fisheries, loss of wet land, and health impacts from blowing salt and highly saline shallow groundwater. (16)

The key areas of tension among Central Asian nations on water dispute are:

- Lack of coherent water management;
- Failure to abide by or adapt water quotas;
- Non-implemented and untimely barter agreements and payments
- Uncertainty over future infrastructure plans. (17)

As we mentioned before, the key important point that will lead states to success will be long run greater co-operation in resolution of problems. During 11 years of independence, border and water disputes did not escalate sharply to direct object of conflict between any of other countries concerned. Region states tried to develop their mutual, bilateral and multilateral relations on confidence building nature. As a consequence of the confidence building nature, states should behave respecting and considering each other's interests. The costs of failure to cooperate are high while the rewards of success are great. If the states succeed in establishing so called cooperation, they will create strong political strength too.

"The Great Game" Metaphor and The Importance of Central Asia

"Steal an apple, they call you a thief.
Steal a country, they call you an emperor."
(Old saying)

After the collapse of the Soviet system, Central Asia has turned into a new scene of action of various geopolitical forces that have begun the great game for domination here. The region is attractive with its available resources and geostrategic position in the very center of the Eurasia continent on the intersection of critical transport routes. (18) Traditionally, the West has viewed Central Asia through several metaphors, seeing it both as the site of a "fabled Silk Road" and the arena " where the world's superpowers compete for influence and advantage in a "Great Game". From the vantage point of the "Silk Road" metaphor, Central Asia is viewed "as a critical segment of a cultural highway over which civilizations of the East... and the West...exchanged goods and ideas."(19) The term "Great Game" was originally coined by R. Kipling to label the 19th century Anglo-Russian rivalry for hegemony in Central Asia. (20) It has a great

history, oil, natural gas, cotton, political influences, trade gains, international routes, only path from west to east, big players– Russians, Turks, Americans, Chinese, Indians, Iran. It adds a touch of excitement. A hundred years ago it was Russia and the British Empire playing the Kipling–esque Great Game in the region, with Indian subcontinent the putative prize and denying Russian access to the Indian Ocean the abiding British quest. (21) The British and the Russians started showing interests in Afghanistan since the beginning of 19th century.

The "Great Game", as it came to be called later, started when Persia, with the Russian help, attempted to take over Herat during Dost Mohammed's rule. Russian's interests in Central Asia commenced in the 1830s and they considered Afghanistan as a part of Central Asia. Then Tsarist Russia believed that it had a right and it alone can maintain peace in this area. Subsequent Russian interests in Afghanistan until the end of the Cold War in the 1980s were determined by the same concerns. (22) Today sun has set on the British Empire and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, nowadays its successor, Russian Federation, has also declining influence almost in all areas; economy, politics, governance, administration, decision–making etc. In providing healthy foreign policies towards its backyard, (as they assume), NIS countries, especially countries of Central Asia, are getting more difficult ever before because of uncertainty in internal affairs of Russian Federation and its continuation in external affairs. One more obstacle that creates difficulties at the level of impossibility is, the engagement of other major powers and neighbor states to the regions' daily life economically and politically. The region with untapped oil–rich energy reserves and natural gas resources geostrategic and geopolitical standing between two nuclear possessing powers, Russia and China and close deals of Turkey shaping the way of new emerging game of power politics, economics and strategies on this part of the world. So, this shows us Central Asia is still a chessboard, with many national interests at play, but they are behaving very attentive and clever in order not to clash with each other's interests. This is the region that both west and east has their eyes on. It is rich in untapped oil and gas while US reserves are running down, China is desperate for more oil, and no one outside the Gulf wants to rely on Saudi Arabia, Kuwait or Iraq which have the biggest oil reserves. (23) Pipeline Stan (refers to Central Asian states) is the golden future: a paradise of opportunity in the form of US \$ 5 trillion of oil and gas in the Caspian basin and the former Soviet republics of Central Asia. In Washington's global petrostrategy, this is supposed to be the end of America's oil dependence on the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). This is of course the heart of the matter in the New Great Game – compared to which the original 19th–century Great Game between Tsarist Russia and the British Empire was a childish tin soldier's diversion.

The Caspian states hold at least 200 billion barrels of oil, and Central Asia has 6.6 trillion cubic meters of natural gas just begging to be exploited. (24) Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are the major natural gas producing countries. Especially Turkmenistan has very significant place in natural gas production. Apart from oil and gas, there is copper, coal, tungsten, zinc, iron, uranium, gold. Before the territorial rivalry was "A–priority" for dominant players but the objective this time is not so much control of territory. It is on the large reserves of oil and gas in Central Asia, especially the reserves of Caspian Basin. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, and their Caucasus neighbor, Azerbaijan, all former Soviet republics, are the sites of the world's largest oil and gas significant reserves. Only Kazakhstan's estimated untapped oil reserves are 50 billion barrels. Turkmenistan possesses world's 4th largest natural gas reserves. Proven oil reserves estimates vary between 15 to 40 billion barrels, representing 1.5 % to 4% of the world's proven oils reserves. Estimates of proven gas reserves range from 6.7 to 9.2 trillion cubic meters, with perhaps 8 trillion cubic meters of additional reserves, according to the International Energy Agency. This represents approximately 6–7 % of the world gas reserves. (25) (Only in Caspian Basin). Natural gas now accounts for about 23 % of world energy consumption. It is projected to

account for almost 30 % by 2020—and is rapidly becoming a globally traded commodity. (26)

The world is changing. Population is growing, related to this growth demands and supplies for goods and services are increasing. Demand for energy is also increasing day by day because of developing industries to respond these increasing needs. Asia already accounts for about 20 % of world energy consumption—and its demand is projected to rise sharply. Demand for oil and natural gas of Central Asian region comes from close neighbors China and India. (27) By its 10 % annual growth during the last decade, China demands and seeks for new sources of energy for her developing industry. The other country is India with the same situation. Competition among the United States, Russia, China, Great Britain, Turkey, Iran and other powers for the control of the Caspian's oil and gas deposits has been dubbed the "new Great Game." (28) Having a difference than 1. Round, which took part in 19th century, this "Great Game" gives important role also to the regional states. Now they can bargain to defend their interests by using their trumps against them. The other advantage of this is the number of players. Number of states that wants to benefit from the regions reserves of natural resources is many and this creates opportunity to break dominant strength towards region. Central Asian states have chance to choose their strategic and economic partners among several powers. So it means that no one can force to fulfill or follow certain economic, foreign and trade policies. It will depend on states' own interests and will and that will lead them to make right choice, which will provide economic prosperity, social welfare and healthy, well-planned foreign policies. Mutual understanding established reliable partnership and relations are essential for golden future. The powers that involved and want to benefit and be dominant players with rule making actions in recent competition can be arranged as follows:

- United States of America
- Russian Federation
- People's Republic of China
- Republic of Turkey
- Islamic Republic of Iran
- India
- Pakistan
- European Union

Now we will try to survey the policies of major powers towards Central Asia.

United States of America

In the 1992 Gulf War, the United States of America tightened its control over Persian oil and Gulf States.

Now the United States of America is not really interested in Caspian oil and Central Asian natural gas resources to supply its own internal industry. The USA is struggling for control of the Caspian oil fields and Central Asian natural gas reserves because of other countries strong need for energy in the 21st century. States such as Germany and Japan, who has important and dominant role in world economy and power politics are "energy poor" and need access to oilfields and natural gas reserves outside their borders. Most Third World countries also heavily dependent on imported oil. So basically United States wants to control them as the superpower of the world. The starting point of the second

ongoing "Great Game" over Central Asia is the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s. But it became fierce and exciting by the U.S.– led "global war on terrorism" which led to the intervention in Afghanistan. As the war in Afghanistan becomes a mopping up operation, the US has stepped up troop deployments in the region, in what Russia and China fear is an effort to secure dominant influence over their backyards, a region rich in oil and gas reserves. (29) It was the first time in history on 6th October 2001, American military forces landed in Central Asian region in Uzbekistan. The contributions of the Central Asian states against terrorism and specifically to the campaign in Afghanistan have been significant and unprecedented. This is the region in which the United States had no history of prior engagement before the collapse of the USSR in 1991, and viewed as firmly within the sphere of Russia's influence throughout the 1990's (30). It was the beginning of the real clash of the interests over the region between significant major powers: USA, Russian Federation and China because both Russia and China see the region as a "backyard" from history. Official US pronouncements emphasize "significant areas of continuity" in American policy in post–Soviet Central Asia. The USA spent nearly US \$5.5 billion in Central Asia and the Caucasus by way of assistance since then, which adds up to policy commitment. (31) The USA now deploys all its instruments of power to establish itself as a major player in Central Asia and across the entire Commonwealth of Independent States (NIS).

Still, despite its enormous power, it remains an open question whether US policy can realize those interests and make the United States a 'core state' in the region. (32) To be more influential in the region, United States only supports construction of pipeline routes, which bypass both Russia and Iran and this action of US towards pipeline routes via Iran and Russia was the end of them. Today the interests of the United States in the region are identified as:

- Cutting Russian monopoly over the export of "Azeri and Kazakh oil and Turkmen gas";
- Promoting multiple pipelines of evacuation of the energy, "some not transiting Russian territory at all";
- Watching for a possible clash of interests between Russia and China in Central Asia (which "should not necessarily disturb US interests" but holds interesting possibilities);
- Watching for a similarly possible clash of interests between Turkey and Russia;
- Responding to Central Asian states "desperate" keenness for engagement with the West ("this opportunity will not last for ever"). (33)

Russian Federation

Geographic location, shared history, common production systems, infrastructure and institutions, and old dependence on Russian financial subsidies were conjectured, as the main pillars that would guarantee a continued interest in extensive cooperation with Russian Federation. During 1990s, as a successor of Former Soviet Union, Russian Federation developed several foreign policies towards the Commonwealth of Independent States especially the main target were the states of Central Asia. The main aspects of RF's interests in Central Asia since the disintegration of the Soviet Union are composed of strategic and security issues.

The strategic concerns are two fold: first, to integrate the Central Asian states in the CIS sphere and make them close allies to Russia; and, the second, to deny external powers strategic access to Central Asia. (34) The security concerns are related to a) radical, extremist groups, b) Tajik factor c) Afghan factor, which might affect the future instability of Russia as well. "Yeltsin period" of Russian foreign policy was not successful in achieving specific goals, because they were not sufficient and lack in implementation. After the appointment of Yevgeniy Primakov and starting so called

Promakov's doctrine with the conception of "Near Abroad", the interest in Central Asia and Caucasus raised but the role of Russian Federation still stayed less important in the region, real aspects of foreign policy could not settled on right pillars. By developing "Near Abroad" concept, Russia tried to gain again the same strong dominance, as it was during SU and to gather former republics under one umbrella. The reality is that newly independent embryonic Central Asian States were unwilling to accept Russian dominance again. They could not rely on economically weak and politically unstable Russia. They had to turn to west in order to be able at least to strengthen their newly earned independence. Russia watched with concern that as long its southern border independently minded states began to cooperate and shift their orientation away from Russia. Uzbekistan became the most outspoken critic of Russia among Central Asian States and the most eager to enter cooperation with the USA. Turkmenistan limited its military cooperation with Russia on the grounds of its status recognized by UN General Assembly, of "permanent neutrality".

As Russia saw its influence in Central Asia decline, it feared that it would be supplanted by the engagement of outside powers in the region. (35) Central Asian states preferred bilateral agreements rather than taking active role in Russian lead CIS. After Vladimir Putin's strong policies nowadays relations are shaping on positive way. To show the importance of the region after the presidential elections, he visited Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in May 2000. During his visit bilateral agreements were signed on military–technical co–operation. Also Russia is trying to agree on long–term agreement on natural gas and oil export between regional states of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. In early 1990's Russia's main partner was only Tajikistan because of its internal civil war.

Under the leadership of V. Putin Russia tries to gather its foreign policy goals and tries to be more influential in the region. In breaking external power influences especially USA and EU, Russia co–operates with China. Shanghai Cooperation Organization could be a basic example of it.

China

China is also one of the most important players having borders 3000 km long with three Central Asian countries–Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, whose aim is to develop mutual trust relations with Central Asian states. China is interested in regions energy rich reserves because of its increasing energy demand and trying to supply this from the Central Asia region. China considers the Central Asian states in the context of Eurasia. They have a linking role, not only in geographical sense, but also in the political and cultural senses. Central Asia can be called "bridge" between East and West. China is closely interested in the stability and prosperity of the region. If there were turbulence around that bridge, the future of political and economic cooperation in the whole Eurasian continent would be seriously affected. (36) Threat perceptions of China and Russia are almost the same. Xingiang regions separatist movements might begin if supported or fuelled. Maybe the main reason of Chinese well–planned engagement and good relations towards the region is volatile Xingiang. In early 1990s, when Central Asian states declared their independence, there seen an action of separatism in Xingiang region.

At the same time, regarding relations of China with Russia and USA, it must be noted that fears of China, connected with probable increasing political and military ties between Russia and NIS of Central Asia have balance with its fears, connected with rising geo–strategic and economic role of the USA in the region. (37)

China's priorities in the Central Asia region are:

- To avoid any kind of instability;
- To provide security for available energy resources;
- To widen economic co-operation;
- To prevent western other power influences in across the -region;
- To establish security and stability organizations;

China has interest in exploitation of Kazakh oil and Turkmen gas. In 1998 treaty about the construction of pipelines from western Kazakhstan and eastern Turkmenistan respectively was signed. Central Asian countries also realized the importance of China for themselves. There is an interest in regional co-operation and business contacts development between China and Central Asia. Central Asia has also market that demands cheaper and normal quality goods of China. The effects of these Chinese activities in Central Asia in the long term undermine the Russian position in the region, and to some extent, this could lead to the initiation of a Russian retreat in the "Great Game"(38). Maybe this is the beginning of the end of Russian dominance and influence in the region. The other major powers of the region that are also jockeying in so called "Great Game" are Turkey and Iran. But are not as powerful as the states that we mentioned above. The only way for them is to co-operate with one of the big powers such as USA, Russia or China. In this type of long-term cooperation, Turkey will choose USA as a main partner and Iran is supposed to be a partner of Russia-Sino Pact.

Conclusion

Aftermath of 9/11 terrorist attacks changed the way of thinking and defining foreign and security policy at the international level. By the operations towards the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the intervention in late 2001, Central Asia earned a strategic geopolitical importance. Central Asian states were active participants and supporters of action in defeating terrorists. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan opened their airbases for the use of American forces and Turkmenistan opened her airbases for only humanitarian aids. Establishment of new interim government and ISAF forces to provide political stability can be considered as a birth of a new nation. The US-led intervention to Afghanistan had positive impacts on stabilization in terms of economic and political normalization.

- Central Asia got out of extremists and radical groups, problems that were chronic headache of regional states, especially Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Supports from Afghan groups were cut and now they have strong allies and sufficient, well-educated forces to crack down rebellions.
- Central Asian countries found an opportunity to realize long-term pipeline projects transiting Afghanistan that may play a key role to bring social and economic welfare to the newborn nation and rest of the region. Tripartite meeting of the heads of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan as a certain steps to the beginning of practical implementation of a huge project on construction of gas, these three states in late December 2002 in Ashgabat is a hope for future peace and stability.
- Importance of stability and social welfare in this part of world as the center of Eurasia was renewed and brought the idea of supporting struggles of regional governments in fighting against instability and poverty.

Economic prosperity and economic independence is a significant factor in consolidating national independence. At least states must be self-sufficient in providing basic necessities and needs of inhabitants. Despite the macro economic problems such as high rate of inflation and unemployment in late 1990s, some of the Central Asian states were able to

record positive economic growth. With vast reserves of natural gas and oil region is a potential supplier of energy to Asian markets and to Western Europe in the 21st Century. Economic indicators of Central Asian countries will be in increase as soon as the untapped reserves begin to be exploited.

Economic and Demographic Indicators for Central Asia

Country	Gross Domestic Product (Nominal GDP), 2001E (Billions of U.S. \$)	Real GDP Growth Rate, 2001 Estimate	Real GDP Growth Rate, 2002 Projection	Per Capita GDP, 2001E	Population 2001E (Millions)
Kazakhstan	\$21.4	13.2%	7.0%	\$1,442	14.8
Kyrgyzstan	\$1.5	6.6%	5.3%	\$290	5.0
Tajikistan	\$1.0	9.5%	7.5%	\$152	6.3
Turkmenistan	\$5.4	18.0%	13.0%	\$988	5.5
Uzbekistan	\$10.8	4.3%	4.4%	\$428	25.3
Total/weighted average	\$40.1	11.1%	7.1%	\$705	56.9

Source: DRI/WEFA (39)

According to major statistics of the institutes of the world, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan will exhibit economic growth above 10 %. Unfortunately, at the moment Central Asian economies highly depend on their energy exports. It is anticipated that supporters of energy exports to world market from Central Asia will approach this process as a mutual benefit and understanding nature. The other action, which must be taken immediately, is to accelerate bilateral and multilateral trade relations within the region and neighboring countries.

All of the governments of former Soviet Union countries understood that CIS will not work effectively and productive, as in the example of last Kiev Summit on 12–13 of January, in which most of the member states were represented at prime–ministerial or ministerial level.

Therefore, in the future of the region CIS Organization could not play any important role in cooperation. It also gives the idea and pushes to focus on medium/long–term regional integration but for short term to cooperate on ECO and SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) level is mandatory. EU's integration process will be a good example for the regional integration of Central Asian states.

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